773 829 "They were covered with shaggy body hair, beard and hair; their long nails resembled claws; their teeth resembled fangs. They knew no language and had no clothing to protect themselves from bad weather; they lived in holes dug in the /99/ ground or in habitable natural caves, at the bottom of which they slept and kept their prey. To defend themselves against wild animals, they placed wooden spikes and pointed rocks at the entrance of these quarters. These deep holes communicated with each other and together formed regular underground villages" (Fig. 6) (1).

[532]

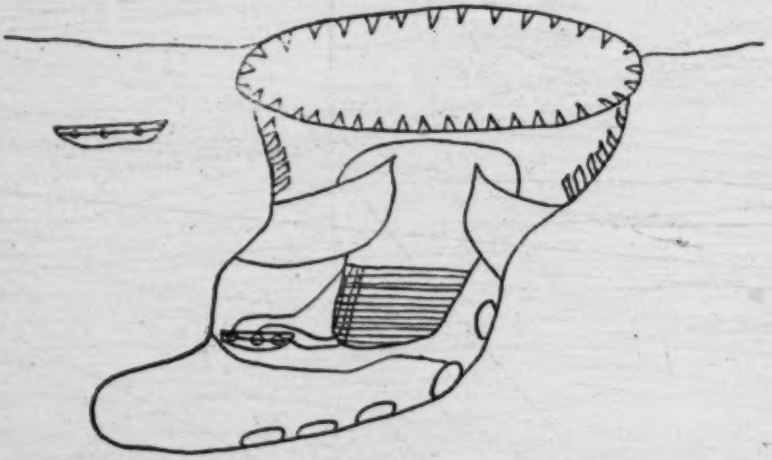

Fig. 6 —Underground home of primitive men. The entrance is guarded by pointed rocks. In the center, the drawing of the first loom invented by men. At the left, the shuttle (see p. 181). (Drawing by an informant.)

[72]

1. Some of these excavations in the neighborhood of Ségou, which may still be visited today, are venerated by the Bambara as ancestral homes.

Since they did not know language these men communicated by means of head gestures, movements of the feet and hands, and grunts. When a difference arose between them, before using their hands they drew back their lips and measured their long canines to determine who the winner would be. "Later they were given language, but

773 564 32 41 [172]

The first agricultural tool was the yirewolo (literally, noble, Fig. 9, B), thus named because of its antiquity, mogokoroba (literally, old person, ancestor).

b. Stone tools Later, craftsmen learned to use stone. They used neolithic axes called "thunder stones" (1) which were used as scissors.

1. The Bambara, like other Blacks of the Sudan, attributed divine origin to certain neolithic axes (see p. 71. It would seem that a great many primitive tools had been found by them in the area at the time of their arrival.

Those of the Gwondougou were at all times famous for their solidity. The craftsmen worked together and when they had rough-hewn their models, certain individuals among them were delegated to sharpen these by rubbing them on a rock.

The farakun (literally, stone head) (Fig. 9, D) was the first axe the handle of which was invented by an artisan who, having poisoned the sharp edge of his tool, wished to try it out on a tree. He sank the stone into a young tree trunk with the idea that the leaves would dry up of themselves. But he died without having ascertained the result. Later a passerby, having tried in vain to remove the stone from the tree, cut the wood above and below it, and in handling this new tool, was surprised at its efficiency. The use of the hafted axe spread among men who utilized the fiber of the nyama to tie the stone to the wood. In addition, the stone could be separated quickly from the handle and used as a knife to cut meat or bones. The handle was used as a pointed stick with which to dig in the ground and to attack animals.

It is probable that hafting was also applied to wooden hoes made in two sections and used /117/ for a long time in areas where there was no hard stone. In fact, a myth concerning the discovery of the cultivation of cotton, which preceded that of cereal grains, mentions the fact that men used to take their handles home, but left the ends of their hoes at the crossroads each day in honor of the local spirit.

c. Iron tools Finally, the Gwonna discovered iron and developed the science of metallurgy (2).

B 101 614 Kaarta people are called Nya-Ngolo-la after Nya-Ngolo, an ancestor of the chiefs of the clan; and the Ségou people are called Barama-Ngolo-la after Barama-Ngolo, an ancestor of their clan.

B S 101 [567] Nicknames are also used between individuals of different tribes. The Soninké often call the Bambara Dyon-ko (slaves) because, having long been engaged in the slave trade, they sold many Bambara as slaves (1). The Bambara generally call the

1. See in the Kaarta chronicle which follows how Massa and others after him captured caravans of Bambara slaves belonging to Soninké owners.

Soninké Marka (for Mara-ka). They still use the term Marka dialan'u (dry Marka people) to designate the Soninké who abandoned their own dialect in favor of the Bambara dialect. On the other hand, they use the term Marka kan'-fo-la-u (those who speak Marka) for those among the Soninké who have retained their own dialect.

In the Ségou region, the Bambara use the expression Bani-n-kono-u (birds of the Bani) for the Soninké, people who live along the banks of [11] that river; their more general term for the Soninké is the surname Dyeme-ka-u, from Dyeme (or Dyime) meaning "a long-legged water bird" of the marabou species. According to the interpretation given to me, the names Bani-n-kono-u and Dyeme-ka-u allude to periodic journeys made by the Soninké to the large commercial centers to the south, especially Oucrodougou [Ouagadougou?].

The Ségou country was called Dyeme-ka-u by the Bambara during the period of the Soninké rule (1). On the other hand, when

B S 172 101 1. At this period, the Soninké chief, Souleiman-ba Kofta, lived at Sora, today a ruin, which the Bambara call Soro-toumou (ruins of Sora) and which is situated in the Ségou country between Massa-la and Kono-dimini.

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Sora was the capital of a territorial district called Tandougou.

The songs of the gessere, who are the Soninké equivalents of the Bambara dyeli, often tell of Souleimanba Kolta, of Sora and Tandougou.

the Bambara came into power, the Soninké called it Dyon-ka-dugu (land of slaves).

Origin

B
*173 The tradition which is generally accepted, and which was first reported by Raffenel and Quintin, has it that the ancestors of the Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta came originally from Toron, a region situated at the headwaters of the Milo and the Baoulé, both tributaries of the upper Niger. From there they presumably moved in a northeasterly direction and then spread out toward their present habitat and developed the empires of Ségou and Kaarta (2).

2. "An oft-reported tradition says that the Banmana came from Toron, the eastern province of Oussoulou, situated in the present colony of the Ivory Coast. It was on the route between Odienné and Sikasso, not far from the former. It seems, indeed, likely that the original habitat of the Banmana was located in the extreme southeast corner of the cradle of the Mandé family and that it extended from the right bank of the upper Niger, approximately near Siguiri, to the left bank of the upper Bagbé (or Bagoé), where it touched the territory of the Sénoufo [Senufo] people. The first conquests of the Mandingue [Mondingo]

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[174]

*[173] himself into the position of being in open conflict with the people of Doua, since he felt that he was not yet ready. So he simply sent back the following answer: "Let anyone at Banan-koroni who desires to join the ton' present himself, and the members will decide." Six men from Banan-koroni were admitted under the sponsorship of Ménkoro.

When winter was approaching, Kassoum asked that a field be cultivated for him. Mamari persuaded his ton' to cultivate a field for his mother and for fodder for his own horse, a second field for Kassoum, and a third for Sibiri, the dyala-tige.

Old fa Séri, on learning of this decision, said to the other elders: "Our young men, who do nothing for us, who obey us only when they feel like it and who help themselves from our granaries to provide their beer, are now going to spend their time working on fields from which we'll not get a single grain. Don't you think we'd better put an end to this state of affairs?" An old marabout interrupted: "The boys are entitled to use their two free days, Monday and Thursday, to do whatever they want." This opinion was heeded and the young men were left in peace.

The harvest was very abundant and Mamari, particularly, had a great deal of millet. He divided it into two equal piles and, having called his father, said to him: "Here is the result of my companions' labor, and I am giving half to you. However, it must not be forgotten that those who have provided our food are not our slaves but rather, free men, [36] to whom we must show gratitude and generosity. Therefore, from this day forward, you will send to the ton' 10 gourds of couscous and 20 jugs of beer. Have no fear that you will lack for food. I need only give the order and every granary and every field will be pillaged."

The old man departed, delighted to have a son who paid such deference to his old age. However, either because of an excess of joy or for some other reason, he died soon after, and Mamari congratulated himself on having escaped his father's curse (1).

•[172]

1. He built a house in the Djenné style at Ségou-koro, of which I have seen the last remaining vestige.

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●[172]

consisting of a rectangular pillar
worn away by the rains.

[765] According to custom, the members of the ton' settled down in front of the deceased's house for a week, singing, dancing and generally carousing in the usual way.

When this traditional period was over, Mamari asked them to enclose his father's and his mother's houses within a single wall. They set to work and built a wall with only one door, [622] over which they placed the pyramidal ornaments used only for chiefs' doorways. Within the enclosure they left the existing division in two parts, and it was henceforth understood that the part formerly occupied by Mamari's father would be reserved for people from Doukounna when they wished to stay in Ségou.

Kassoum was determined to show that he had been properly brought up and knew how to return courtesy; so, one day, he invited Mamari to a drinking party, planned especially in his honor. Mamari accepted and, on arriving, found that Kassoum, from impatience no doubt, had started the celebration so far ahead that he was already dead drunk.

According to the usual custom, Mamari ordered one of the [273] ton-den', as it was his duty, to taste the dlo first (2). Lacking

2. A precautionary measure to guard against poison.

a utensil in which to pour a small quantity of the beer, the taster sipped from the crock itself. Kassoum jumped up in a fury, crying out that the ton-den' was a disgusting person, and [37] broke a gourd full of beer over the fellow's head. In turn, Mamari became angry at Kassoum, whose manners struck him as coarse and intolerable. Then, after much invective on both sides, Mamari left the place to return home. Kassoum took up his bow and arrows and set out after Mamari. However, since he was slowed down by his drunkenness, he could not go far and his arrows missed their mark. Mamari returned to Ségou and, for the first time, installed himself in his father's house.

*173 In order to extricate himself from this crisis, Mamari appealed to his sister, Sana-ba, wife of an important chief, Wara Dyara, whose residence was at Dina on the Niger, upstream from Ségou. Sana-ba offered Mamari her gold jewelry to clear himself, but, again at the instigation of the Soninké, the jewelry was refused in order to force Mamari to declare himself insolvent and thus to bring about the separation of the ton'-den'.

The chronicle reveals in detail this internal struggle which was destined to have far-reaching consequences. In the end, the matter was settled by the "elders" who recognized the original cause of all the trouble. They advised the separation of the two antagonistic elements. This advice was followed, and two fla-n-ton' were formed: one composed of the Bambara with Mamari as ton'-tigi, and the other of the Soninké under Kassoum.

Mamari's fla-n-ton' resumed its normal life once more. The ton'-den' met on Monday and Thursday of each week. [294] They prepared their own meals from what they obtained by hunting, but Mamari's mother provided the dlo and mead. In order to reimburse her, each ton'-den' was assessed a donation which, because of its destination, was called di-songo (price of honey).

These festivities and the pillage required to support them angered the "elders," and the fa, Siné, Mamari's father, ordered his son in the presence of a blacksmith to give up this disgraceful way of life. The young man made use of this threat to persuade his companions to help him build an independent dwelling. This house was erected at Ségou-koro on the spot where the fla-n-ton' usually met and where, later on, was built that part of Mamari's residence -- by then he had become fama of Ségou -- which was called Biton' blon da' (entrance of the house of Biton) (1).

•[172]

1. In 1902 I was shown the last vestige of this structure, a square pillar of sun-dried brick in the last stages of disintegration.

From that time on, the fla-n-ton' had a reputation that attracted everyone who was anxious to escape from the overly

173 there is no country called Mandé and there never was. Every chief situates its capital wherever seems best to him."

Among these capitals are counted: Kangaba, Miami, Tabou, Diakala, Kounfangué ... For the Bambara, Mandé is the center from which issued the 48 Sudanese populations which spread out following a definite movement (3) to cover the territory included between the

3. S. de Ganay, "Notes sur la théodicée bambara" [Notes on Bambara Theodicy]. [Ed., Revue de l'Histoire des Religions, Vol. 135 (1949), pp. 187-213.]

Atlantic coast, the Senegal, the Niger, and up to Dahomey. (4)

4. Zahan, Aperçu sur la théogonie dogon [A Look At Dogon Theogony].

[796] The memory of this expansion is still preserved today in the septennial cult which brings all the people to the sanctuary of Kangaba, the Mandé blow (the vestibule of Mandé), under the direction of persons of pure race belonging to the Kéita family. (5) Other

5. G. Dieterlen, Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion].

traditions recognize two centers of expansion: one to the south of Kangaba at Balanzan, the other in the Nioro circle to the south of Goumbou, Waghadou. Intertribal septennial cults commemorate this event.

From our historical point of view, we know very little about the origins of the Bambara.

● 172 Prehistoric geological strata, still poorly dated, found in the valleys of the Senegal and the Niger show us that these territories were very anciently inhabited. Franz de Zeltner (6) has gathered

6. Fr. Zeltner, "Quelques gisements préhistoriques de la vallée du Sénégal" [Some Prehistoric Strata in the Valley

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of the Senegal]. [Ed., Bull. et Mém. de la Soc. d'Anthropologie de Paris, 16 Nov. 1916.]

objects of worked stone in the valley of the Senegal over a distance of 200 kilometers between Bafoulabé and the confluence of the Falémé. The Kolimbiné basin also presents numerous strata. Zeltner and Waterlot have found worked stones as far as Nioro, 250 kilometers from Kayes; this is the northernmost [45] point. The tools described by R. Vaufrey (1) are made of worked schist and labradorite.

1. R. Vaufrey, Le Néolithique paratumbien: une civilisation agricole primitive du Soudan [The Paratumbian Neolithic: a Primitive Agricultural Civilization of the Sudan].

They include polished and unpolished axes, disks, scrapers, graters, polishers, etc. R. Furon specifies that the strata of Kaarta have yielded a Mousterian jasper industry in the upper alluvial layers of a site at Baoulé, along with Neolithic tools of Nigritic type above the alluvial layers, and, finally, at Guétéla there were numerous tumuli, from two to three meters, covered with pottery debris. In the vicinity of Bamako, Waterlot gathered, from the surface of the ground, paratumbian works in schist and dolerite, including, among others, incompletely polished axes, microliths of quartz, and a whole collection of agricultural material.

Painted grottoes have been described by Zeltner. One near Bamako represents men and horses (the Bambara designate these grottoes by the name of kouloubléma). Four others in the vicinity of Kita present the figures of men and animals, and alphabet-like forms (the Malinké call them Sebe, "writing," and attribute them to the Niamara, giants who were the first men), as well as paintings of hands in negative. Finally, the grotto of Boudoufo contains geometric drawings. The conventional representations of men and animals recall the rock carvings of the Sahara and Egypt.